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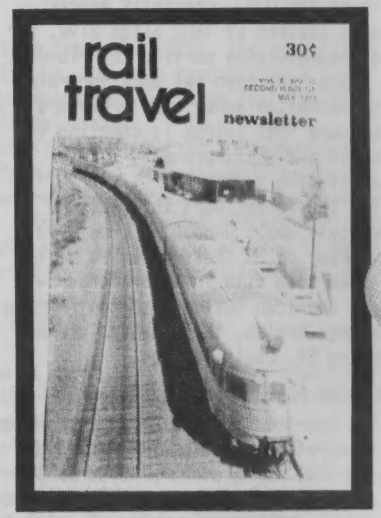

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VOL. 4 NO. 11
FIRST ISSUE OF
JUNE 1974
#85

Express Ads

AMERICA DISCOVERS AMTRAK! If our travel professionals are unable to secure space aboard a filled train, and alternate transportation must be found, count on our full service travel agency for expert assistance. Prudential-Grace Line's fine ships, for example, ply the Coast route connecting Los Angeles-San Francisco-Seattle-Vancouver. Or if flying is desired, all arrangements will be discreetly handled. Tickets may be purchased on approved credit cards and mailed directly to you. Our service costs you nothing--and may even save you money. Call us at 398-2994, or write GREAT WESTERN TOURS, 639 Market St., San Francisco 94105.

AMTRAK AUTHORIZED AGENTS CAN HELP obtain your reservations for ALL rail travel. No need for you to hang on the telephone for hours when we will do it for you and then mail tickets to you. Make your summer travel plans and RESERVE NOW! Let's Travel Tours, P O Box 146, 501 South D St., Perris, CA 92370. (714)657-4785.

FANTASTIC PUBLIC TIMETABLE BARGAINS. Over 100 grab bags sold so far to delighted collectors. $13 worth of timetables only $6.00, $30 worth only $13. Early to late 60's, nice variety, condition excellent. Also sell those amazing clear plastic slip covers for public timetables. Only 6¢ each. Tom Coval, 21 E. Robin Rd., Holland PA 18966.

QUALITY B&W NEGATIVES: 35mm, 2¼x2¼, 616 negatives of many major lines, shortlines and industrials. All negs fine-grain processed. Cabs, switchers & pass. units. PC, SOU, NW, SP, BN, FP&E, D&R, GN&A, MRR, P&LE, WM, B&O, C&O, EL, L&S, E&M, KCS, P&S, C&I, etc. List & sample 50¢. T.N. Colbert, 1008 Englewood, Parma, OH 44134.

Railroad Uniform buttons 50¢ each postpaid. Denver Tramway Co., Union Pacific, Chicago Great Western, Grand Trunk, Pennsylvania Reading Seashore Lines, Nickel Plate, South Shore Line, North Shore Line, Norfolk and Western, Central of Georgia, Lehigh Valley and Seaboard. J. Lajoie, 22 Stevens, Methuen, Mass. 01844.

INDEPENDENCE LIMITED TO RUN AGAIN! Thursday July 4, 1974, Cincinnati to Williamson W.Va.--July 5 Williamson to Roanoke Va. via Princeton and former Vgn. Ry.--July 6 Round trip out of Roanoke on Shenandoah Valley Route--July 7 Roanoke to Washington. Write R.N.R.H., PO Box 681, Roanoke, VA 24004 for information.

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OFFICIAL GUIDES FOR SALE. April-June, 1969 and October 1970 to September 1972. $4.00 apiece or $100.00 for entire set. Clark Winston Cox, Jr., 402 E. Scenic Drive, The Dalles, Oregon 97058 or call 503-298-8387.

SOUTHERN RAILFAN - newsletter on current southeastern railroading from railfan viewpoint. Covers freight roads, major and minor, plus much news on Amtrak, Auto-Train, and Southern Railway passenger service. Consists, riders' reports, equipment news, general news. Sample 45¢, 10-issue subscription $4.50. WALT STRINGER, 132 EDGEWOOD RD., ARDMORE, PA 19003.

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 11 (Whole No. 85), First Issue of June, 1974. Published twice monthly by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 9470 Subscription $7.00 per year; single copy 30¢ (vol. 1-3 25¢). STAFF: James Russel Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Kenneth Maylath, East Coast Correspondent; Peter Roehm, Northeastern Correspondent; Peter Putnam Bretz, Roving Correspondent John Ferry, Midwestern Correspondent. Mailing date this issue: June 13, 1974.

ON THE COVER:

Photos to accompany Glenn Lee's report in our last issue on the press run of the EXPO 74. (Top) Amtrak F unit 102 leads the first EXPO 74 east from Seattle May 19. (Middle) Ex-N&W dome car 9560 was the lone dome operating on the first EXPO 74. The consist was all-Amtrak, all-fluted stainless steel cars for opening day. (Two days later, Reno Fun Train ex-SP equipment was substituted.) (Bottom) The Italianate tower of Seattle's King St. Amtrak station looms over equipment from the PUGET SOUND which is rescheduled to reach Seattle at 11:50am for connection with the EXPO 74 to Spokane. Ex-TWIN CITIES ZEPHYR parlor-dome-observation "Silver View" has run regularly at the rear of the PUGET SOUND in club-lounge service, and features a piano. The train has been running 6-8 cars. Photos by Glenn Lee.

EXPERIMENTAL ROUTE ANNOUNCEMENT DUE BY END OF JUNE

The Dept. of Transportation apparently has not yet decided which route to select for the required new Amtrak "experimental" route for this fiscal year. The announcement must be made by June 30 under present law. It will likely coincide with the release of the DOT's annual report on Amtrak, which is now nearly complete. Portions of the report have been revealed to the press, and were reported on in the Wall Street Journal (June 10) and the Washington Star-News (June 7). The DOT concludes that Amtrak will not become profitable, and that a new method of financing the corporation should be found. It recommends that Amtrak borrow directly from government agencies instead of receiving government-guaranteed bank loans which will cost the corporation higher interest. The DOT expects Amtrak operating deficits to average $150 million per year thru June 30, 1977. Given this rate, and the estimated need for about $1.4 billion in new equipment thru 1980, the present system of guaranteed loans would cost the corporation over $100 million in interest alone. Amtrak could save $10 million a year by changing its method of borrowing. Possibilities discussed include permanent federal subsidies for some routes and government takeover of Amtrak's debt.

The DOT report criticizes Amtrak for poor equipment usage, claiming that bad-order rates are too high, so that less equipment than optimum is usable at any given time. The report says that Amtrak's coaches are in use only 30% of the time, and sleepers only 44%. This compares with Auto-Train's 44% coach utilization and 59% sleeper. Amtrak's bad-order rate was about 15% last year, and 17-20% this year. Says the report: "Auto-Train achieves a zero bad order ratio with equipment whose average age is about the same (22 years for Auto-Train versus 25 years for Amtrak) and whose mechanical characteristics are the same..." The DOT blamed "uncoordinated maintenance and transportation operation" and lack of control over the shops doing Amtrak's maintenance for this situation.

Despite the DOT Secretary's opposition to long-distance trains (see RTN, last issue), the report does not recommend discontinuance of any trains. RTN has learned that the Chicago-Boston route via Cleveland is still under consideration as candidate for the experimental route to be announced soon, altho the DOT is also looking at Chicago-Buffalo with some favor, since it does not include the segment of track ripped up by Penn Central with apparent Amtrak approval, which would require up to $2 million to replace. Washington newspaper reports have said recently that the Chicago-Boston route had been rejected by the DOT, but Secretary Brinegar denied this in a May 23 press release, saying "the route remains under consideration along with a number of others." Another possible route known to be highly favored by the DOT is Denver-Kansas City.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads--25¢ per line for line of 80 characters & spaces, with $1 minimum. Please send remittance with order. Display ads: $15 per page (5x8); $7.50 half page; $3.75 quarter page. Send remittance with orders under $15 to Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

AMTRAK TO DISCONTINUE RAIL TRAVEL CREDIT CARD

In a move certain to infuriate droves of card-holding railfans, Amtrak has decided to eliminate use of the Rail Travel Card, the only credit card usable for purchases made aboard trains. Amtrak has been reportedly sending notices of discontinuance to card holders in the past few weeks, altho a number of users in our area have not yet received one. Cards will no longer be good after June 30. Amtrak said it has not made a decision on whether another card would be substituted for on-board purchases. The card was formerly administered by the Rail Travel Credit Agency, an independent organization with a number of member railroads, until Amtrak took over administration of the credit billings itself.

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AMTRAK'S NATIONWIDE MAY 19 TIMETABLE APPEARS

The latest version of Amtrak's nationwide timetable--entitled "All-America Schedules," got around to ticket offices in early June. The 60-page schedule, NRPC Form A, printed in a quantity of 800,000, is Amtrak's biggest and probably best offering yet. An attractive and easily readable blue, purple and red route map on page 1 gives the page number where schedules for each route are found. Throughout the folder, new pictorial symbols are used to denote Metroliners, Turboliners, Silverliners, RDC, dome cars, bus, etc. Important bus connections with Amtrak trains are listed on page 54, along with Georgia Railroad's mixed train #103-104. Canadian and Mexican rail connections are summarized on page 55. On pages 46-47, a 2-page ad in both English and Spanish informs one of some advantages of train travel. On page 24 a new ad states: "If our train can't take you all the way, finish your trip by bus." It mentions Greyhound and Continental Trailways, and says "We're all working together to give America better transportation." The ad exhibits a friendlier stance toward Greyhound than the bus company has thus far shown Amtrak. The full color front cover is adorned with on-board photos of well-patronized trains.

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Simply stated, Amtrak is an attempt to meet this challenge with a new corporate form directed to modernize and improve railroad passenger service by innovative sales and contemporary management techniques on a for-profit basis, but having available to it support in the form of grants and loans provided by the federal government. This response is very different from that of European and the Japanese economies where governments responding to the same problem moved directly to massive and extraordinarily expensive nationalization. Amtrak is more than an effort to solve an urgent railroad problem or even to save and modernize our national railroad passenger service. It is an American response to problems of providing essential services that arise in industrial societies as they reach maturity. There is a great deal riding on our success or failure to make it go, and a more academic approach might have been of great value to your readers. I know Mr. Loving spent at least 100 hours interviewing Amtrak employees alone and I find it difficult to understand his failure to appreciate the material supplied.

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Nearly everyone agreed this couldn't go on; nearly everyone agreed that the airplane, the auto and the bus would replace the intercity passenger train; and nearly everyone thought that after a reasonable trial that all but a limited amount of the service would be decently buried.

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(continued on page 16)

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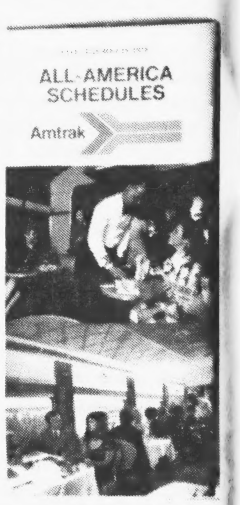

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Urban-Suburban Transit

STREETCARS MAY RETURN TO PORTLAND

The Portland, Oregon Tri-Met transit system directors have approved expenditure of $7500 for options to purchase 15 used PCC streetcars from Toronto. The cars would be used to reintroduce light-rail transit service, probably on the Portland-Oregon City line. It was on this route, then operated by the Portland Traction Co., that rail service was halted in 1958 despite an Oregon PUC order to continue operations on a reduced schedule. About $1.8 million would be required to begin service and another $2 million might be needed for a third track to reduce freight train interference. Estimates are for 32,000 riders daily.

A CHARGE OF POLITICS ON THE CHICAGO EL

Chicago's CTA, to be replaced July 1 by a regional transit authority, has been slow to install needed safety devices on the EL, says Business Week magazine (May 25), partly because of politics: the state governor is a political foe of Chicago Mayor Daley and has been "sitting on" an emergency loan of $7.9 million for CTA; the Nixon Administration has been slow in handing out federal funds. However, after the most recent crash--there have been 5 serious accidents this year--the federal government moved to approve money to install cab-signalling devices on the CTA's trains.

SHOULD BART COME DOWN THE PENINSULA?

That's the question asked by Stanford Workshops on Political and Social Issues. Their conclusion: BART fails on all counts, and a better plan for the San Francisco peninsula would be upgraded SP rail commuter service, better bus service, etc. SWOPSI's just-released report concludes that BART won't reduce auto congestion or affect overall auto usage, and most of its patrons will be from other transit systems. Obtain the report, "Rapid Transit & the Public Interest," for $3 plus tax in Calif. from Publications Coordinator, SWOPSI, 590-A Old Union, Stanford, CA 94305.

NEW SCHEDULES ON THE LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD

May 20 saw probably the biggest changes in years on New York's LIRR. The state-operated line added 47 weekday trains, faster running times, fewer changes at Jamaica, and major changes in scheduling. Other commuter lines in New York and New Jersey also announced added runs and improved schedules for the same date. The Penn Central has also added 17 new trains out of Boston.

TRANSIT BRIEFS: A massive breakdown on PC's New Haven line at evening rush hour occurred May 28 when a pantograph broke off a new train, damaging the line and making it necessary to shut off power, annulling about 25 trains... Plans for restoring commuter rail service in Northern Virginia are moving ahead with final approval last month for seeking federal aid to buy equipment for the runs from Woodbridge and Manassas into Washington DC... Kansas City's Area Transportation Authority has obtained control of the old Country Club streetcar line, and plans are being formulated for possibly making it part of a future rapid transit system. ... The state of Massachusetts has just won federal approval for shifting $670 million of highway money for use on mass transit. This is apparently the first U.S. transfer of funds to mass transit under the "opened" highway trust fund... The ICC has turned down a 5% intercity bus fare increase, but allowed a 3% rise given last August and due to expire to continue... Michigan's governor has asked that a $1 billion transportation bond issue be placed on the November ballot...

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"We believe Amtrak top management must bear primary responsibility for its poor performance. Amtrak's record to date indicates that Mr. Lewis has neither the experience, the knowledge nor the commitment to effectively fulfill his job."

--NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell in testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee, June 6

MOVE TO ACQUIRE NEW EQUIPMENT FOR AMTRAK

The DOT announced June 3 the approval of federal guarantees for $347 million in additional loans to Amtrak for the purchase of new equipment. Included in the package are: 57 Metroliner-type coaches for the Northeast Corridor for $24 million; 200 single-level, high-density seating Metroliner-type coaches for $82 million; 11 electric locomotives for $8 million; 135 diesel locomotives for $67 million; 6 French-built Turboliners for $18 million. These equipment purchases are to be made during calendar year 1974. The guaranteed loans will also permit Amtrak to pay for: modernization of existing cars ($63 million); overhaul of locomotives ($6 million); and construction and modernization of stations and repair facilities ($79 million). In approving the loans, Secretary Brinegar noted that they exceed that originally budgeted by the Administration, but the okay on the increased budget "primarily recognizes the energy savings that can be derived from well-patronized intercity rail passenger service and our belief that the proposed expenditures will result in significantly increased patronage." He said the 6 Turbos are for use out of Chicago, and said he was willing to approve more new equipment for the Boston to N.Y. route following further analysis of "possible mixes of turbine-powered and new Metroliner-type locomotive-powered trains," and asked Amtrak for an operating and marketing plan on which to base a decision.

On June 6 Amtrak announced it had placed orders for the 200 coaches and 4 French Turboliners (2 are already running in the Midwest, and the purchase of them raises Amtrak's total to 6 Turboliners). The 200 cars to be built by Budd look exactly like Metroliners on the outside, but cars are designed so seating capacity can be changed by means of "floor tracks" for different occasions. A new buffet section has been designed to increase meal capability, and each seat will have individual trays and reading lights. Amtrak said the cars will be convertible from day coaches to overnight coaches or to lounge-coaches or entertainment cars. They will have all-electric air conditioning and heating. Cars are due to be delivered by May, 1976. Amtrak will take delivery of the 4 additional Turboliners next December and January. Amtrak will place an order shortly for 25 new locomotives.

AUTO-TRAIN'S SECOND ROUTE IS INAUGURATED

On May 24 the inaugural press run of the new Auto-Train from Louisville to Sanford, Florida got underway on time at 5:30pm, carrying 250 riders, 20 crew members and 40 automobiles. The approximately 1000-mile trip takes about 22 hours. A reception preceded launching of the new train, with a band and a lavish display of food. A train and a swan carved out of ice decorated the banquet, at which Auto-Train president Eugene K. Garfield presided. Regular every-third-day service began on June 2, and that will be increased to daily service by the end of the year. Southbound trains will leave Louisville at 3:30pm and northbound will pull out of Sanford at 1pm. The one-way trip costs $225 for an auto, two passengers and all all meals included. Regular trains will accommodate 400 passengers and 160 autos using a 38-car consist.

SPECULATION ABOUNDS ON DOT'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF AMTRAK EXPERIMENTAL ROUTE

As rail travelers await the DOT's promised announcement by June 30 of the route chosen to be Amtrak's first Congressionally-mandated experimental route--a new one to be chosen yearly--speculation is rife as to the relative probabilities of each possible route's being chosen. It is fairly well known that the leading contenders are New York/Boston-Chicago via Cleveland, Kansas City-Denver, Ogden-Los Angeles, and New Orleans-Jacksonville. It is said that the Ogden-L.A. route is most justifiable economically, since it would involve only splitting the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR at Ogden, with part to run to L.A. The Kansas City-Denver route has the least potential ridership. The route thru Cleveland has the backing of 65 members of Congress as well as a 12,000-signature petition. The DOT is rumored to be favoring an abbreviated Cleveland route, perhaps to Buffalo only.

canadian news letter

A CANADIAN NATIONAL 6-car Tempo train running from Toronto to Windsor on May 30 was derailed near Ingersoll, Ontario when it struck a freight car that derailed on an adjoining track. The engine and all 6 cars left the track, and several tilted up to a 45° angle. One report said that 60 passengers were injured, but none seriously. Most of the riders were reportedly Americans from the Detroit area.

DESPITE SOME DROP in patronage and civic unrest due to recent rubber tire fires on its existing system, the Montreal Metro expansion program is getting into high gear. The 4.8-mile eastern extension of Line One is underconstruction and is expected to be completed by March, 1976 to the site of the Olympic Games. A western extension to the same route, some 5.2 miles long, will be completed in December, 1976. Some 430 new subway cars, with chopper controls, will be added to the system within the next few years.

TORONTO'S NORTH YORK dial-a-bus experiment, widely heralded as a major breakthrough in urban transportation when introduced in September, 1973, is already in limbo. Operating deficits have reached $3.19 per person, and critics point out that the dial-a-bus loads could be handled more cheaply by taxis. Critics want variations on the dial-a-bus theme tested, like subsidized taxis now in use in Peterborough, Ontario. Christmas loads of 1100 per day at North York have declined to 600 per day in early summer. Toronto transportation planner Richard Soberman said one reason for the failure was lack of government contact with citizens before startup.

TORONTO'S POPULAR BELT-LINE Tour Tram will be running again in the summer of this year on a downtown-area loop covering King and Queen streets, the city's two heaviest streetcar routes. The 50-year-old "Peter Witt" cars have been beautifully restored for the runs. (Peter Witt himself was manager of the Cleveland Street Railways in the 1920s, and was in later years referred to as "Traction Wizard.")

THE MONTREAL METRO, in a surprise move, awarded a bid for 423 new subway cars to the second lowest bidder--an ailing snowmobile manufacturer! Bombardier, Ltd., of Valcourt, Quebec, 80 miles east of Montreal, which had a $6 million loss in 1973 following a decline in snowmobile sales, will build the new stock for $117.8 million. This is about $140,000 more than the bid of Canadian Vickers, Ltd., which built the original 369 Metro cars. Metro officials said that a portion of the Vickers coupler design did not meet specifications. Vickers said the announcement was "misguided" and hinted that they "might have more to say" on the matter.

CN HAS ANNOUNCED completion of its 5-year program of CTC installation on the mountain region main line between Jasper, Alberta and Boston Bar, B.C. route of the SUPER CONTINENTAL trains. Some 511 miles of CTC are controlled at Kamloops, B.C.

CP RAIL HAS announced an order of 50 diesel locomotives of 3000hp each from GMD at London, Ontario. With other Canadian lines, CP Rail has been suffering from a chronic locomotive shortage in recent years.

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU and family rode a "Trudeau Express" campaign train on a 4-day tour ending in Montreal May 31. Consist of the CN train is not available.

WATER PIPE OUTLETS will be built every 400-500 feet in the Montreal Metro subway as part of a plan to reduce fire hazards in the all-below-surface route. Some $45 million will be expended following disastrous fires which have destroyed about 45 cars since 1971.

CANADIAN PACIFIC'S BELOVED "Princess Kathleen," which went aground on Lynn Canal near Juneau in September, 1952 and sank, may be raised. Sylvia DarVelle, who owns salvage rights to the vessel, is seeking permission to raise the "Kathleen" and tow her to Juneau for use as a waterfront hotel and convention center. The 17,000hp ship, built in 1923, was for years the toast of the coastal fleet for her great speed and reliability.

Going to Canada

I. West

GLENN LEE RIDES THE PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL

Seattle's spring weather had seemed more damp and dreary than usual, and when the clouds parted before the last weekend in April, it was time for some railroamin'. A short excursion north on Amtrak's PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL began Friday evening at the King St. station, which is a busy place at that time, with four train movements within an hour.

On a stub track for Portland was the MOUNT RAINIER with a healthy consist of eight cars, and an even healthier passenger load. The M.R. has been carrying ex-TWIN CITIES ZEPHYR dome-parlor-observation "Silver View," and looked like a million as it got out on time. On a "tunnel track" was a 7-car NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, including 3 coaches and one sleeper. Its dorm-dome-coffee shop was ex-DENVER ZEPHYR car "Silver Kettle," and the N.C.H. took on a good load, and was out on time at 6pm, without waiting for her California connection, the COAST STARLIGHT, which arrived 43 minutes down at 6:03pm. A crowd of 40 transfered to the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, and we were out at 6:22pm, 7 minutes late.

Although often a 3-car train, the P.I. usually gets a fourth car for weekends. Amtrak E unit 332 was pulling GN coach 1302, ex-EMPIRE BUILDER "Corral Coulee" sleeper-observation; "Traveller's Rest" car 8351; ex-CNW coach GN 1096, occupied by a Girl Scout group and ex-TCZ "Silver Glade," a dome car.

Vancouver, B.C. passengers are seated in the rear car, and I felt at ease and at home as we got underway. "Silver Glade" had been built in 1947, and has held up very well over the years, but is looking in need of a rehab job. At the rear of the forward coach section the hand-drawn mural entitled "Father Hennepin Discovers Falls of St. Anthony-1680" showed two Indians, a buckskin hero-coonskin hat figure aside the priest-explorer. Great stuff! The kind of material of a commemorative stamp at its best--re-enforcing one's relation with his heritage. The TWIN CITIES ZEPHYR must have been a classy train, I thought.

Curling around the hill above Interbay, and rolling onto the drawbridge over the ship canal, to one side I could see a big log tow in the Government Locks, en route to the mills. On the other side, rolling slowly down Puget Sound in a modest wind, a great fleet of sail boats, their multi-colored sails stretching for the last breath of air; a dazzling sight no matter how many times you see it.

As the P.I. picked up speed to race north on the beach-side line, the colors of the sailboats seemed to have set the pace. Colorful and relaxed. Slow and easy. Across the grey water beyond were a few traces of other-worldly Indianola, perhaps the most relaxed and pleasant of all the rural communities across the Inland Sea, where the quality of the good life has been only slightly diminished since the ex-SP steam ferry "San Mateo" stopped running there in the late 1940s. Thoughts of this superior way of living seemed to transfer to the P.I., and we rolled on through the beauty of the late afternoon in a slight state of suspended animation.

Rounding the curve below Seattle's North Beach neighborhood, I could see a southbound freight coming down the sound some miles up the line. It seemed to be pulled by yellow ex-SP&S locomotives; but when it passed, they turned out to be BN green. The yellow equipment was SP and UP reefers. The BN locomotives had been almost completely disguised as they blended in to the lush foliage of the steep bluff along the line! The bluffs have been the source of much trouble in the recent heavy spring rains, and in several locations between Seattle and Everett, slow orders were in effect. Lots of mud and trees could be seen in the Sound along the tracks where they had been hurriedly dumped by clearing operations.

The P.I. is a great place for ferryboat watching. At Edmonds, I could spot the big state ferry "Elwha" on the Kingston run; large enough to keep the normal second boat at layup this Friday night. At Mukilteo, a few miles to the north, the three "boomer" boats, including the extra, were hard at work. The fleet consists of two ex-Maryland boats from the Chesapeake Bay run, and the "topless" ferry "Kulshan", ex-"Crown City" of the San Diego-Coronado route.

I was enjoying every minute of the ride until we stopped at Everett, and noted the P.I. was on the upper platform, rather than the "lower" depot track formerly used by the B.C. passenger trains. In a moment we were through the tunnel under downtown Everett, and heading east and then south on the main ex-GN line toward the Cascade Tunnel. This diversion, made only in recent months, adds about two miles to the P.I.'s mileage and about 6 minutes to the running time. The passengers know it, for as we turned off at P.A. Junction to the connecting route for Delta Junction, the grumbling started along the lunch counters of the Rest car.

"I ride this train about once a month," said a college student,"and I don't know why they started going this way. All it does is show you the slums, sawmills and scrapyards of Everett." A young man across from me at dinner looked off quizzically as we bounced along bad track that should be freight only. "I usually fly or take the bus when I go anywhere," he said, "and I can see why" as we rolled and bumped. The creeping continued for what seemed like an unusually long time until we arrived at Delta Junction, and were back to the faster main track.

As we picked up speed, the atmosphere cleared, and dinner became a "fun" time, especially in the beautiful "Rest" car, still a classic some 20 years after it first appeared on NP rails. My dinner companion was the son of a customs & immigration service official At Blaine, and soon we were discussing border-crossing problems, including the long waits on the P.I. to be abolished in early May in favor of at-seat, en-route inspection as in the "good old days? The long-haired young man had encountered problems of his own when returning from trips to Vancouver, and once was removed from his car at Blaine for "secondary inspection" at the grilling rooms. En route, he asked the in-charge officer if he could see his father. "Who's your father?" came the gruff reply. "He's Mr. X, the head officer," answered the youth, and inspection stopped right there. It was fun to note that the all-powerful customs officers had been stopped cold for once in their lives. For the most part, though, it's a tough job. The student said that Blaine, Wash., was now equal with Miami, Florida in drug flow, one of the nation's two worst ports.

Dinner was over as we slowed north of Burlington for the twisting route around the Chuckanut Drive area, where steep mountains plunge down steeply into the sea. The long twilight was still holding, and to the northwest, a break in the clouds showed what sunsets are all about. As we proceeded through the gathering darkness, we rolled across fills under steep cliffs, and one might expect the scene to be a "Sports Afield" cover painting entitled, "when the bass are biting." A beautiful sight, and much prettier than anything along the highway.

Along portions of this route can be seen the now-rotting trestle that had been used until the 1930s by the electric interurban railway that paralleled the ex-GN route as far south as Mount Vernon. This line, running south from Bellingham, had once carried early Greyhound-type buses piggyback on flat cars. Rare photos still exist showing a steeple-cab electric locomotive pulling a single highway bus on a flat car, its passengers still aboard; practically the only way through until the twisting Chuckanut Drive highway was built.

Departure from Bellingham was 8:55pm, 24 minutes late. The delay for the COAST STARLIGHT was not made up; and had been added to by the new diversion at Everett. Still, the P.I. was rolling right along at high speed until a red block at Ferndale at 9:05pm forced a complete stop. Two toots and we moved ahead slowly and around the curve and then waited until a southbound freight headed by BN 2505 pulled slowly through the siding. Technically a "no-no" since the 1973 Amtrak Improvement Act was passed and thus the P.I. lost more precious minutes. Arrival at Blaine was 9:29pm, some 29 minutes down.

Two railroad buffs in the dome were discussing the current rail situation in the Northwest, and the poor performance of the P.I. at the hands of BN played no small part in the conversation. "That Everett change is just another BN manuever to stab the schedule," claimed one of the fans, and there was no nay-saying to that. I recalled the Ralph Nader study group book "The Interstate Commerce Omission," which is an excellent study of transportation problems in the U.S. On p. 295 (paperback edition) in Nader's passenger train chapter, the group charges:"....many railroads, including the Chicago Burlington & Quincy, have special teams of exployees whose corporate task is to devise ways of discouraging passengers from taking the train." That was the CB&Q of Lou Menk,

and tonight's probably still the same. For there may just be the possibility that among themselves, no real railroad man is really a railroad man unless he is doing the passenger service dirt somewhere, whether it's his, or Amtrak's. Machismo in the executive suites, so to speak.

Departure from White Rock was 9:45pm, or 29 minutes down, after an on-board customs inspection by the always-courteous Canadians.

After we departed White Rock, I returned to the Rest car, and asked for a coke. "It's against the law to sell coke in Canada" said the attendant flippantly. "Well then, how about a 7-up or a ginger ale?" I asked. "It's against the law to sell those, too," he replied. "I don't believe you" I said, and then asked the young girl at the lunch counter if she would bring me some tea, and it appeared quickly. The flippant attendant was anxious for a little sharp conversation, and took his time talking down to me, saying if I wanted to break the Canadian customs seal, he would sell me a coke. And then I got a lecture about Amtrak's reluctance to purchase a bar permit for sales in Canada; and then heard that the attendant could not sell liquor, scotch, gin, vodka, cards, etc. etc. blah, blah, blah. I dawdled over the tea, and noticed another problem. Dishwashing was in full swing, and the steam emerging from the sinks was clouding the car windows.

Finally we pulled into New Westminster, and the carload of noisy Girl Scouts got off. One had screamed practically in my ear as I passed through the

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"The train is poorly run ...

the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL seems lax, lazy, and disreputable."

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car for dinner, her decibels reaching the threshold of eardrum pain. The leaders of the group smiled fixed, grim and wan smiles, and I assume they were glad to be off the train, too.

Some 113 passengers had left Seattle, and of these, some 80 had crossed the border, and perhaps 50 of these remained to suffer the final indignity of the trip, the wying of the train to back into the terminal at Vancouver's C.N. Station.

Trucks groaned, switches clanked, and the cars jolted stopping-and-starting as the train headed into the tail track, and then backed out. The grumpy rear brakeman showed a bit of class actually running from one switch to another in one instance, but the delay seemed, as C. Northcote Parkinson would put it, the deadliest form of denial. Vancouver's downtown lights rolled from one side of the train to the other as the quizzical passengers wondered aloud what was happening. The brakeman on the ground complained that one of the time-lock switches didn't respond well many nights adding more delay.

With the slight feeling of a survivor, I watched us back in alongside long cuts of CN CUPER CONTINENTAL equipment. We were exactly 30 minutes late. Then the final little insult. The Vancouver car, with its dome, was unloaded forward, through the vestibule of the car ahead. Thus the majority of the passengers had to walk away from the depot before returning to it. I complained about this to the rear brakeman, who on a well-run railroad would also be helping put the passengers off, and got only a grunt and a gesture. So much for courtesy and dispatch. I couldn't help but think of the current Continental Airlines ads: "Isn't that just like it? You just can't get good service anymore! But on Continental We Really Move our Tail for You!"

We walked through the depot with a sense of deflated values. I have enjoyed the P.I. on previous trips, and when arriving less than fulfilled, have marked it off to me—tired, a bad day, or something. But that is really NOT the case. The train is poorly run, and there seem to be few improvements made over the months. The situation cries for a strong business manager, perhaps one who might even be labeled a "hatchet man." But there is now no doubt in my mind not only that the operation must be cleaned up and straightened out, but also that it must be done soon, and with thoroughness.

The contrast between the P.I. and the Portland runs which also originate in Seattle is great. While the Portland runs seem "tight ships" in so many cases, the P.I. seems lax, lazy, and disreputable.

I'll be on the P.I. again soon; but I'll probably have written another letter to my congressman complaining about it, too. Join me in both efforts, will you?

II. East

PETER ROEHM RIDES THE SCOTIAN

Memorial Day weekend presented itself as an excellent time to sample the Canadian National's service east from Montreal to the Maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Thus we boarded a bus of the Vermont Transit Line just after noon on Saturday and headed north to Montreal.

We arrived in Montreal two hours ahead of the CN's departure time and thus had a chance to take the Metro to Bonaventure, end of the line, making the bus station to rail station transfer painless, quick and all underground, as one goes downstairs in the immaculate bus station and comes up in the equally immaculate rail station. The CN ticket agent verified our reservation for section 3, car 1241 on his computer read-out and after adding in the 3 prepaid meals, the $118 was charged to Air Canada-CN's card.

The train boarded a half hour before departure and a large contingent was on hand, including a lot of high school and college-age people, in groups and individually. We found our car clean, quiet, and the beds (upper and lower) ready. Two attendants looked over our car ("Ernesville"), one a 30-year man on the CN, and his assistant, a student at Dalhousie University in Halifax doing a summer job on the CN's sleeping car staff.

Departure came on time, and after about an hour of idle conversation on railroading, we retired, assuming that all was well outside our land capsule as we sped north. Not so. Occasional awakening by sharp swaying told us that either the tracks were in need of something or that we were on the wrong line. Both were correct. A freight wreck on the main had caused us to be detoured over the Richmond line (which sees local RDC service from both Quebec City and Montreal) and this put us 3 hours late by the time we departed Riviere du Loup for the balance of the trip, where one hour would be sliced before Halifax. The run normally takes 23 hours, and would today take just 2 more—not really that bad, considering the cause of the delay.

The SCOTIAN's consist included a Montreal-built FP4 (#6783) followed by a GMD Ltd B-unit (#6620) and Montreal-built RS-10, #3126. The cars began with a baggage car, baggage-sleeper, the all-roomette "Inkerman," the section-bedroom-roomette "Green Lane," a diner-lounge, 3 full coaches, a coach-cafe-snack-pub car (#3039), 2 more full coaches, another full coach with the new long-distance seating, full diner, full-length club car "Bon Vivant," and our sleeper "Ernesville," a section-bedroom-roomette car. This would be the consist to Matapedia where we would set out cars (in consist order) 2-3-4-5-6 for Gaspe, where they would be put in front of two standing coaches and picked up by RS-10's 3861 and 3879 plus a generator car for Perce and Gaspe.

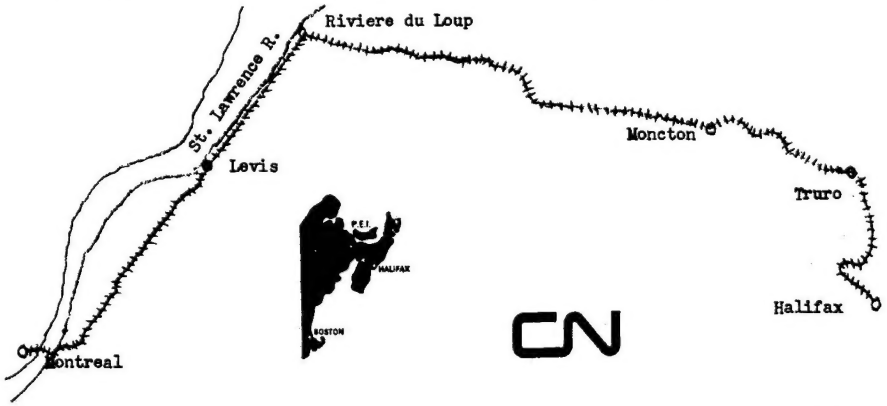
Our first taste of CN's culinary artistry presented itself in a breakfast of two scrambled eggs surrounded by three long link sausages balanced and washed down with toast, orange juice and coffee. The food was ample, well cooked, tasted good, and was served on bare tables with only paper mats (full cloths would appear at lunch and dinner). Our waiter, a 40-year man on the CN, was congenial, cooperative and efficient. Between Truro and Halifax the 3 of us plus the 2 porters would converse on railroad and other topics before arrival.

Toward Mont Joli the landscape is basically one of farmland and small towns in the literal sense. After Mont Joli the land begins to rise up to hills and even to mountains, some of which could qualify in the Westerner's definition of same, if only marginally. Mont Joli itself is a connection for the daily-except Sunday train on the Canada & Gulf Terminal to Matane, 36 miles north on the St. Lawrence River, a body of water which we have more or less paralleled since leaving Montreal, some 359 miles back. There would be little sighting of water now until after Matapedia, where the Gulf of St. Lawrence shows up on the left side of the train. At some points the higher mountains along with the mist, the leftover patches of snow, and general overcast would leave one wondering whether he might be on the White Pass line instead. Spring had not arrived to this country yet and was said to be some 3 weeks behind schedule, a fact borne out by the leafless trees and the 6 inches of snow a few days earlier in Cape Breton.

The stop at Matapedia took about 15 minutes for the setting out of the Gaspe section (switched by our road units) and then we were off to Campbellton and Moncton, the latter being a change point for a Saint John connection. By Moncton we had cut our time loss to 2½ hours. Our third engine was cut out here and a baggage car added. This left us with a net consist to Halifax of two units of power and 11 cars.

During the 840-mile ride we conversed, acquired an in-depth visual knowledge of Quebec and Maritime geography, walked the length of the train observing the various and sundry passengers strewn about or stretched in some fashion for sleeping or napping; one girl had her portable tape player going and an ample supply of tapes stacked on the window sill to keep her involved at least to Halifax if not somewhere beyond. Too, part of our time was consumed talking, viewing, taking pictures, and nibbling two bowls' worth of pretzels in the adjacent club car, "Bon Vivant," certainly a good name for this facility. Bowls of pretzels were dotted about the car from early morning and kept full, altho few people seemed to avail themselves of this recreational aside. The purple/lavender against beige colors gave the car life and the layout and interior design of the car was modern and comfortable.

Meal-wise, the better would come after breakfast, and we were on first call for lunch. Having prepaid the meals, we would obviously choose the best going, and we did in the form of a halibut steak of light and tender texture accompanied by mixed vegetables, potato, tea, apple pie ala mode, rolls and butter. Servings were ample and quick. So would be dinner, which for us consisted of roast rib surrounded by mashed potatoes, broccoli, and flavored on the side by Canadian burgundy from the Niagara peninsula. The wine was quite good with the roast as well as the dessert of Canadian cheddar and crackers. Such a luxury now—wining and dining to the music of the rails with an ever-changing panorama passing outside.



From Moncton we sped on to Truro by way of Amherst (bus connection to Charlottetown, PEI). At Truro, RDC (Autoliner) connections are made for Sydney on the CN and for the hardy rail traveler there is thrice weekly mixed train service south to Windsor via the Dominion Atlantic. Leaving Truro it was home free as we made up more time and seeing the lignts of Halifax in the distance, came charging around the Bedford Basin (harbor) and ended up in the large, wooden, barn-like train shed of the Halifax station, 2 hours late, at 12:30am. The interior of the CN station (also used by the DAR trains to Yarmouth) was clean and bright and connects to the CN Hotel Nova Scotian where we would spend the wee hours before our Dominion Atlantic departure Monday morning to the south.

We could find nothing about the SCOTIAN that we should put a check mark against. The sleeper was clean, well appointed with towels, soap, blankets in the washroom and bed areas; all switches and lights and temperature units worked as they should; the seats and other upholstered items were clean and not torn; the crew was friendly and accommodating, just as were those in the dining and club cars. The food was adequate in taste, preparation, presentation, quantity, and the service prompt. The passenger count in the coaches was less than half, but our sleeper was sold out save for two sections, and the others appeared to be at least half full for Gaspe. Too, this was a Saturday night departure and traffic is slow then. Patronage in the diners seemed sufficient and the cafe coach, besides having a small bar and table section, had also a snack takeout counter, and judging by the evidence of consumption in the various coaches apparently did okay. Prices were on a par with Amtrak in most cases. It is a long ride, but we enjoyed it thoroughly and the CN seemed to like having us and the others on board.

NEW READERS are invited to take advantage of the special introductory offer given on the back cover of this issue. Renewing subscribers will find a renewal blank inserted in their copy of RTN a few issues before expiration of their subscription.

mixed train of thoughts

HERE'S MORE INFORMATION on the Trudeau campaign train mentioned in the Canadian section: the train got underway in Sydney on May 28, making several stops and remaining overnight in Truro. May 29 it left Truro for an overnight in Campbellton, after 6 stops. On the 30th and 31st it was scheduled to make stops in Eastern Townships of Quebec, reaching Montreal the evening of the 31st..... A CANADIAN PACIFIC spokesman said recently that electrification is inevitable for North American trains, and in Canada will require a large government commitment for construction costs..... AMTRAK HAS AGREED to make a feasibility study of an Omaha-Kansas City route. At the same time it said it's not encouraging states to propose new route under the law's cost-sharing provision because of a shortage of funds..... THE MILWAUKEE ROAD had initiated merger talks with Burlington Northern, but the BN called talks off this month, saying a merger wouldn't be in the best interests of BN or its stockholders..... THE SUPREME COURT voted 5-4 on May 13 to prohibit the sale of impeachment posters in mass transit advertising. The case started when a committee tried to buy space from Chicago's CTA..... THE DERAILMENT OF the SOUTHERN CRESCENT, reported last issue, was determined to have been caused by improperly set trackwork, and resulted in the firing of one track worker and the suspension of another..... AMTRAK'S COMPUTER SYSTEM seems to foul up sometimes. We have seen quite a few reports of cars running empty when the computer said they were sold out, and conversely of oversold trains when seats were supposedly available. The COAST STARLIGHT, for one, has been suffering these problems..... WE'RE HEARING COMPLAINTS about the lack of coach pillow service on the NIGHT OWL, despite its all-reserved status. Also, a rider says that bright lights are kept on in coaches for about an hour before, during and after the stop in New York..... AUTO-TRAIN HAS asked exemption from several ICC passenger train regulations that do not seem applicable to its special service--for example, the requirement of a nationwide reservations system and the use of credit cards..... STATE OF MAINE'S Commissioner of Transportation spoke recently of transportation problems in the state, and gave the opinion that the "emotional appeal" of rail travel detracts from the more serious problem of rail freight. He thinks there aren't enough people to make rail travel profitable in Maine, but that Amtrak might make Boston-Portland one of its experimental runs..... THE HIGHWAY LOBBY, in the form of the Highway Users Federation for Safety and Mobility, in Washington DC, has come up with a privately-done report ("Evaluation of Rail Rapid Transit and Express Bus Service in the Urban Commuter Market", done by the Institute for Defense Analyses) which apparently concludes that transit trips mostly by rail cost more, pollute more, and use more energy than trips exclusively by bus..... PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION in California on May 29 turned down another 3% fare increase on SP's San Francisco peninsula commute line..... OREGON VOTERS DEFEATED a bill late in May to divert up to 8% of the state's highway funds for mass transit, ship and airway uses..... TURBOTRAINS BETWEEN PALMDALE Intercontinental Airport and the San Fernando Valley in Southern California are being mentioned as desirable, using SP tracks..... THE HOUSTON POST editorialized strongly on May 29 against Conrail's lopping off 25% of the Penn Central system..... THE JUNE ISSUE of Money magazine carries an article, "Trains are back on the track." Quote: "Some trains still go bump in the night, but a lot of passenger service now competes in amenities as well as price with othertransportation"..... PLANS ARE STILL underway to get Amtrak to reroute the COAST STARLIGHT to the east side of the Sacramento Valley thru Chico, California.....

OFFICIAL RAILWAY GUIDE will publish its first Passenger Travel Edition in July. It will be out 10 times yearly. Costs $4 a copy, $28 a year, from Nat'l Rwy Publication Co., Inc., 424 West 33rd St., New York NY 10001..... "IT IS LATER than you think!" Remember the theme of the old radio horror show? Well, maybe Amtrak's mailing department is trying to tell somebody something, because we received on June 8 an Amtrak press release bearing the postage meter date June 36, 1974. And a Southern California reader got a notice about his RTC card being discontinued dated June 37, 1974. Time marches on, and wait till next summer we'll have a chance to get organized..... HIGHWAY DEATHS DECREASED in California in May for the fifth straight month--27% below May 1973--showing that the lower speed limit really is helping, even tho the highway patrol reports many speeders and is issuing more citations than ever. Meanwhile the Federal Energy Office is holding gasoline quotas for June to 90% of 1972 levels, after earlier estimating that 95% would be available by now..... CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD on June 1 suspended some discount air fares: youth standy, youth reservation and family fares..... MASSIVE AIR CONDITIONING failures are happening daily on the INTER-AMERICAN, say reports from Texas--especially south of Milano where the MoPac holds the trains to a ridiculously low speed and the batteries won't adequately charge. People are walking off in droves, says one report, and buses must be summoned which run along beside the train carrying the coach passengers. The diner crew works with towels around them dripping sweat..... MEANWHILE, AMTRAK HAS initiated a "pre-season air conditioning program" last month to try to alleviate a/c failures systemwide. Amtrak wants to get all its cars checked by the end of June. This involves inspection, testing and repair of "all major components" of the a/c system, checking of all electrical circuits, mechanical motors & pump units, and checking freon lines for leaks..... ENTERTAINMENT WAS INITIATED on 3 trains June 1: the SOUTHWEST LIMITED, EMPIRE BUILDER and COAST STARLIGHT. All are to have door prize drawings, a children's hour, a happy hour for adults (with $1.00 drinks), and a fun 'n' games period with Bingo, Keno, Take a Chance, or Let's Make a Deal. The STARLIGHT will have a feature film shown the first and second day.....

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CHECKED BAGGAGE SERVICE is now available to and from Glendale, California. A baggage car also appeared on the STATE HOUSE May 19, with baggage handled only Chicago-St. Louis, not intermediate points..... AMTRAK IS OFFERING an "early bird dinner" on trains 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, and 9-10. This is served 4-6pm to help dining car crowding. There are two entrees: London Broil (boneless sirloin), and Half Spring Chicken. Dinner is $2.75, or children's portion for $1.25..... AMTRAK'S NEW ENGINES, the SDP40's are now off the Washington-Florida run, at least temporarily. At least one set of CHAMPION equipment is sporting a refurbished tavern-observation car, probably a former SILVER METEOR car used in recent years on the COAST STARLIGHT and the Empire Service trains..... AMTRAK TRAIN 51, the JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY, regularly arrives in Chicago 3-5 hours late, missing all major Western connections. Cause is the infamous detour route between Cincinnati and Chicago via Penn Central..... BROAD STREET STATION in Richmond, Virginia may be turned into a state-owned regional travel center. A committee of local union members is meeting June 13 to thrash out plans to do this. They want to show the state that the station could house not only trains, but Greyhound and Continental Trailways buses as well. The station is well located in the center of the city..... "IF OUR TRAIN can't take you all the way, finish your trip by bus" says a new Amtrak blurb. COAST STARLIGHT passengers did just that on Friday, June 7, when a freight derailed just south of Mowich siding in Oregon around 4pm. The southbound train was annulled at Eugene, and was turned to run north the next day. The northbound was halted at Oakland and turned southbound the next day, while riders were bused between. On Saturday, #11 only detoured on BN Portland-Chemult. It is not known why the trains weren't detoured over SP's Siskiyou Line.....

(continued from page 5)

operations, including our revenue collection, were conducted by the railroads under a cost reimbursable arrangement which did not specify services or provide for responsible management or control and were essentially for services paid in advance. As the route structure was deemed experimental, subject to validation after two years, our operations were essentially hand to mouth and even medium term planning for facilities, marketing, or organization was most limited as a result.

Rather than blowing an opportunity, I think we have built soundly; we have an organization; and since December 1973, a stable route structure. We have about doubled our seat mile capability from the base established by the Department of Transportation; and we have made solid progress in mending the work definition and cost reimbursement provisions of our operations contract, including a system of incentives and penalties to encourage better performance.

Contrary to your statement that we were unprepared for the energy crisis which materialized in November 1973, Amtrak had to an extraordinary degree prepared itself to meet it.

Incidentally, your article contains errors of fact as well as errors of interpretation which are inexcusable, and the attached sheet points out some of these errors.

It is too late to undo much of the damage which Mr. Loving's piece has done or will do, but I do think we are entitled to ask that you consider these observations carefully, read the few points of rebuttal to the article attached hereto, and reconsider your position. Whether Fortune's editor thinks so or not, this experiment deserves thoughtful attention and this rush to judgment is most unfortunate.

Attached to the above letter was a 4-page Fact Sheet too lengthy to reprint here, and containing material already familiar to RTN readers who have followed the history of Amtrak. The following is a summary of the Fact Sheet:

"The major question raised in the Fortune article is: Did Amtrak blow an unexpected opportunity or did Amtrak create an enterprise with the capability of taking full advantage of an opportunity?" There is next a list of 13 items summarizing Amtrak's weak position as of May 1, 1971--no employees, facilities or equipment; rail travel "had been dying for 25 years and indeed was almost dead"; problems with the operating contracts with the railroads "handed to management"--cost plus payable in advance on basis of railroad estimates, no performance standards, incentives or penalties; collecting of ticket revenues by railroads; railroads to continue collective bargaining with unions; only 2-year experimental period of life and "little if any opportunity to make plans beyond that near horizon"; assumption by Amtrak incorporators and planners that "1200 passenger cars were sufficient to operate this nationwide service and that by halving the routes, it automatically halved the expenses, capital and operating costs."

Next are itemized Amtrak's present assets: over 2000 cars now owned and operated, most completely refurbished in a $63,000,000 program; 366 locomotives, 76 of them new and 100 more arriving; 57 Metroliner-type cars to be delivered in 1975; 5-year financial plan and capital equipment program drawn up last summer, forecasting 51% revenue increase in 1975, over 1973, and planning to obtain 50 "high-performance" cars, 150 conventional cars, 57 Metro-type cars, and 110 diesel engines; revision of this program for equipment purchases after energy crisis hit to add 50 high-performance coaches, 200 conventional coaches and 200 more a year later, and "additional locomotives"; the counting of 18 million riders per year and that rate "rising fast in 1974"; over 8000 employees, with most on-board passenger and station services handled by its employees; design and specifications for new passenger cars; introduction of French Turboliners; initiation of nationwide Automated Reservations and Ticketing System; new contract with Penn Central and so far unsuccessful negotiations with all the other railroads for similar improved contracts; collection of its own ticket sales and conduct of own revenue accounting; opening of "additional routes in response to public demand."

Finally, the Fact Sheet lists "significant remaining problems": 60% of train delays were due to track and signal problems; Amtrak "continues to be plagued with old, non-standard equipment difficult to maintain and support with spare parts"; the railroads owe Amtrak over $50 million in over-payments; there are legal problems with the railroads; and Amtrak has cost problems due to inflation and extensive equipment maintenance.

EDITORIAL

Amtrak's rebuttal to the Fortune Magazine article misses the mark and thus makes of itself an indictment as telling as the article itself. The Fortune article is very clearly a criticism of Amtrak management and not of the concept of Amtrak itself. Says Fortune: "But if Amtrak fails, the entire nation will lose what seems to be its last chance to save an important national asset. ... Amtrak's troubles are primarily a failure of management, and much of the responsibility can be laid upon Roger Lewis..." But Mr. Lewis's letter seems to twist the article into a criticism of rail travel and the way Amtrak is set up to provide it. Says Lewis, "Your failure to see the importance of the Amtrak experiment to a philosophy of American business which you have so consistently espoused is disappointing to me."

Mr. Lewis alters the thrust of the article also by restating its thesis in the past tense: "The major question raised in the Fortune article is: Did Amtrak blow an unexpected opportunity or did Amtrak create an enterprise with the capability of taking full advantage of an opportunity?" But Fortune raises the question of "blowing" an opportunity in the present and future tenses: "Amtrak is about to miss the train" and "Amtrak seems resolved on blowing this phenomenal opportunity." This is no picky grammatical criticism; it is of central importance to Mr. Lewis's rebuttal, for by placing the problem in the past, it allows one to shift the blame back in time to conditions existing on May 1, 1971, blaming the railroads and the incorporators of Amtrak for current problems. Note that Mr. Lewis does not state that Amtrak took advantage or is taking advantage of an opportunity; rather he says that Amtrak has "the capability" of taking advantage. In doing so he seems to fail to refute Fortune's thesis that the opportunity is being blown.

Mr. Lewis's letter states that "Your total lack of comprehension in this instance is most remarkable and quite a departure for your magazine." We agree that the editors of Fortune are sharp, but we feel there is a simpler explanation for the cutting criticism of the article, simpler than a remarkable departure: Fortune is being quite consistent and is telling it like it is. In this instance we side with Fortune, and with the National Association of Railroad Passengers, and with the Department of Transportation's forthcoming annual report, all of which are critical of Amtrak's operations and in many cases of its management.

Amtrak's biggest problem seems to be that of equipment. There isn't enough equipment to go around now because it wasn't ordered early enough and because the existing equipment has been poorly maintained by Amtrak in many instances, and because equipment is utilized less than optimally. Amtrak got off to a very bad start because its unstated intent early on was to keep a low profile on rail travel and make believe it couldn't "sensibly commit" more money that Congress offerred to give it. Amtrak went along with the White House's belief that rail travel could be made to fade out of the picture, except perhaps for the Northeast Corridor.

It's time now to change Amtrak's management, though people in Washington are very gloomy about the prospects of doing so, in spite of NARP's valiant efforts. There are even rumors that the White House selected for its nominees to Amtrak's board of directors people who would vote for Mr. Lewis for another term as Amtrak president. Perhaps only a massive letter-writing campaign to Senators could turn the trick. Write your Senators now and tell them to vote for withholding funds from Amtrak until its management is changed.

LETTERS

I agree wholeheartedly with your editorial on Claude Brinegar's recent anti-Amtrak comments (RTN, last issue). How anyone in his position can so cavalierly brush aside the question of public support of air and bus transportation is beyond me. Nowhere does he mention that we taxpayers fund the construction of the highways and airports which are absolute necessities to Amtrak's competitors. Nowhere does Brinegar acknowledge that the reason most Amtrak routes are "little-used" in 1974 is that Amtrak cannot assemble enough passenger equipment to handle the demands of the traveling public. Nowhere does our Secretary of Transportation indicate that he understands the fundamental purpose of the Amtrak Act--to keep long-haul passenger trains in operation so long as they are well-patronized, not to phase out all service west of Albany and Harrisburg. Contraction of Amtrak services would be colorable if patronage were low and other (government-assisted) forms of transportation were wholly adequate both for the present and for the foreseeable future, but this is demonstrably not the case, and Brinegar should be aware that it is not.

Mike Blaszak

West Covina, California

Your editorial on Roger Lewis et al in the last issue was TOPS! The more RTN readers who write congressmen the better it will be. If your readers don't write about Amtrak, who will? That philosophy has prompted many marathon letter-writing sessions by conservationists and will certainly help.

I appreciated seeing the letter by Robert Scholl. I can recall a reader last year writing to scold you for using the word "dum-dum" to describe Washington officials. Well, they ARE dum-dums, and you deny reality (like admiring the Emperor's new clothes) NOT to call them dum-dums. A lot of people get statusy feelings from admiring their government, but these people simply cannot be allowed to blunt the truth in reporting--they can always subscribe to (name deleted) if RTN is too racy for them.

Name Withheld

Seattle, Washington

Your editorial was solid, to the point, timely. Especially timely in view of the Brinegar remarks which would be almost laughable if they didn't come from someone in so high a position who is supposed to know, or at least hopefully know what he's talking about. Your quote from Fortune in reply to his "inept comparison" hit the nail right on the you-know-what. There is absolutely no way, rail enthusiast or not, that I would be undertaking the cross-country trip I'm about to have by bus. Those who say that people won't ride trains for more than a few hours (even Mr. Claytor has made that remark) should really modify that and say bus rather than train. Even without any overnight rides I can't imagine making a round trip across the country by bus--even at a lot less money with those monthly passes. Between the lack of room and the assorted characters you can't get away from due to the confined space--no thanks. ...I think it might be suggested that Mr. Brinegar take a day or two away from the office and travel overnight by bus, then return by train, and then still see if he thinks long distance trains can be replaced by buses.

Ken Maylath

Baltimore, Maryland

Now just one minute.....

I have always been under the impression that the Northeast would never see a dome car due to the fact that these cars simply cannot make it thru the tunnels under New York City and Washington. Now in the last RTN there is a note on p. 18 that Amtrak's SDP40F's have visited the Nation's Capital on the SILVER STAR on May 15. Amtrak has 15 Pullman-Standard dome lounges and 2 of their dome coaches. P-S's great domes are 15ft 7in high, the exact height of the new SDP40F's.

So what's the story?

Richard Andre

Brookline, Massachusetts

FLORIDA TURBOLINER PUSHED

The Florida press published information late in May indicating that Amtrak is arranging to run a French-built Turboliner service between Miami and Orlando. Reportedly the runs will start June 1, 1975, with two daily round trips six days a week. The 269-mile ride should consume 4 or 4½ hours and costs riders about $13.45 one way.

Orlando promoters are hoping that the trains will be able to run into the 70-plus year old Church Street Station in downtown Orlando, which would be renovated at an estimated cost of $55,000. Presently Amtrak uses a station at 1400 Sligh Blvd. for its long-diatance service to Orlando. No plans have been yet made for raising renovation money, and promoters are aware that Amtrak is counting its pennies and would probably opt for the existing terminal.

The two Turboliners to be placed on the route would undoubtedly be from the order of 20 that Amtrak is hoping to make soon with the Rohr Corporation, American builders of the French-designed trains, two of which are now running St. Louis-Chicago.

AMERICAN FREEDOM TRAIN PLANS

The American Freedom Train Foundation a non-profit educational foundation which will run a steam-powered exhibition train throughout the U.S. in celebration of the American Bicentennial in 1975 & 1976, has moved its New York headquarters to Lebanon, NJ. Accounting offices remain in NY, but all other administrative processes will be handled at Box 1776, Lebanon NJ 08833 for the life of the Freedom Train, which is scheduled to tour 76 cities thru December 1976. The High Iron Company was predecessor of the AFT Foundation, and has run over 35 mainline steam excursions, including the 15-day, 6000-mile "Golden Spike Centennial Limited" from New York-Salt Lake City in 1969 to commemmorate the linking of the nation by rail. AFTT has obtained the financial support of 5 leading corporations, and is accepting donations from the general public.

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